

Ethnic Names in Dimitrie Cantemir's *De antiquis et hodiernis moldaviae nominibus* and *Historia moldo-vlachica*

The works analyzed here, *De antiquis et hodiernis Moldaviae nominibus* (On the Ancient and Contemporary Names of Moldavia) and *Historia Moldo-Vlachica* (History of Moldovlahia) are two projects written in Neo-Latin by Dimitrie Cantemir, at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Their state of project allows certain linguistic comments regarding the author's methods of work and the divers influences assimilated by Cantemir's Neo-Latin. Numerous ethnical names that appeared in these texts (found in the same manuscript) are used in a scientific manner, advanced for that period of time. The author wrote even etymological observations or made comments on the etymologies found in the bibliographical sources. When writing about the Romanian people, Cantemir always presented the native variants. The ethnical names widely used are those collected from the prestigious sources, especially the historical works of Jan Dlugosz, Antonius Bonfinius, Johannes Leunclavius.

Key words: Neo-latin, ethnical names, latinization

Dimitrie Cantemir (1673-1723) is the most well-known Romanian writer who used Neo-Latin in his historical works. His international fame is due mainly to *Incrementa et decrementa Aulae Othmannicae sive Aliothmannicae Historiae a prima gentis origine ad nostra usque tempora deductae Libri tres* (History of the Ottoman Empire) and to *Descriptio antiqui et hodierni status Moldaviae* (Description of Moldavia). The manuscripts left by Cantemir reveal to readers a complicate process of creation, which included a lot of additions and corrections made directly on the texts.

The works we will analyze below, *De antiquis et hodiernis Moldaviae nominibus* (On the Ancient and Contemporary Names of Moldavia) and *Historia Moldo-Vlachica* (History of Moldovlahia), are two small studies, two projects written in Neo-Latin. The first one was, in fact, the sketch of *Description of Moldavia*, while the second one was the Latin short version of *Hronicul a vechimei romano-moldo-vlahilor* (History of the Old Roman-Moldavian-Wallachians), a monumental history of the Romanian people, written in the author's native tongue.

The facsimiles of *De antiquis et hodiernis Moldaviae nominibus* and *Historia Moldo-Vlachica* are now deposited in the Library of the Romanian Academy; they were published in 1983, in the ninth volume of Dimitrie Cantemir's *Complete Works*. They could become an object of interest both for historians, due to the scientific method of investigation, the information gained consulting an impressive bibliography, and for philologists, due to the Neo-Latin used by Cantemir in his works. The stage of project they were abandoned in

allows the critics to make certain linguistic comments regarding the conceiving of the texts, the diverse influences on Cantemir's Neo-Latin, under the pressure of his sources of information and his native Romanian language.

The object of this essay is to study the ethnical names that occur in *De antiquis et hodiernis Moldaviae nominibus* and *Historia Moldo-Vlachica*, the process of Latinization, their origin and variants.

The use of ethnical names is influenced by the author's bibliographical sources, therefore, it becomes an expression of Cantemir's critical attitude towards them.

Although in Cluverius's *Geography*<sup>1</sup> Moldavia is named *Major Valachia* (*Historia Moldo-Vlachica*, 420), Cantemir uses the term *Valachia* for the Wallachians only, following the Romanian tradition. He also registers the local variant, *Munten: a voce Moldavica Munten (sic enim Moldavi vocant Valachos Transalpinos)* (*Historia Moldo-Vlachica*, 416) – “from the Moldavian word *Munten* (this is how Moldavians call Wallachians [living] over the mountains”.

The scientific precision determines the author to register the names that other people or other writers assigned to Wallachians. Cantemir also attaches to these ethnical names an etymological explanation of his own or taken from a well-known historian:

*Ita Leunclavius quoque, in “Pandectis”, in explicatione nominis Valachorum, ait: “Germani plerique tam Italos, quam Gallos vocare solent Walchos et Valischos, quorum linguae provinciales, quum lingua Daciae, quae ipsa quoque Romanorum provincia quondam fuit, affinis esset...”* (*Historia Moldo-Vlachica*, 174) – And so, even Leunclavius says, in “Pandectae”, explaining the name of Wallachians: “Most of the Germans usually call Italians and Galls *Walchi* and *Valischi*, using a provincial language, with whom the language of Dacia, which was once a province of the Romans, is related”.

*Turcae (...)* Iflak, *sive vulgo Vlah et (...)* Kara Vlah, *Nigrum Valachum, sive a primo Principe Radulo, cognomine Nigro, sive ex Graeco corruptum Οὐγγρόβλαχος*, *Caravlah sic dicti.* (*Historia Moldo-Vlachica*, 416) – The Turks [call this country] Iflak or mostly Vlah and (...) Kara Vlah, “Black Wallachian”; either from its first prince, Radu, called the Black, or from the altered Greek word *Οὐγγρόβλαχος*, Carawallachians, this is how they were called.

*Apud Cantacuzenum primum legimus Οὐγγροβλαχίας nomen, quod hodierni Graeci in usu habent, Vlachos nimirum Ungaricos, eo nimirum sensu, quod Ungaris sint viciniore, aut quod olim Valachia Regibus Ungaris fuerit subiecta* (*Historia Moldo-Vlachica*, 416) – In Cantacuzino's I have read for the first time the name *Οὐγγροβλαχία* (Ungrovlahia), which modern Greeks use today, meaning “Hungarian Wallachs”, with the sense that they are closer to the Hungarians or that Wallachia was once submitted to the Hungarian Kings.

*Graeci enim non Blachos, sed Βλάχους, servata nimirum et immutata litera β seu W scribunt et legunt.* (*Historia Moldo-Vlachica*, 184) – For the Greeks do not write and read “Blachs”, but “Wallachs”, that is keeping and unchanging the letter β or w.

Cantemir prefers the ethnical name *Valachi* maybe because it was used by prestigious writers, like Cluverius<sup>2</sup> and Bonfinius<sup>3</sup>. The variant *Vlachi* is considered a transliteration of

<sup>1</sup> Ph. Cluverius, 1697, 382.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>3</sup> Antonius Bonfinius, 1606, Dec.II, C.III, 227.

the Greek word Βλάχοι (*Historia Moldo-Vlachica*, 170). This term is sometimes left in its original form, to avoid critical suspicions: *...hoc tamen ex Cantacuzeno patet, quod Βλάχοι, qui in Thessalia sunt, eiusdem esse gentis cum Moldavis et Transalpinis* (*Historia Moldo-Vlachica*, 172) - ...according to Cantacuzino, it is revealed that Βλάχοι, who lived in Thessalia, are from the same people like Moldavians and Wallachians.

Although in the title appears the adjective *Vlachica*, in *Historia Moldo-Vlachica* the forms *Valachus* and *Valachica* are used *passim*.

The inhabitants of Moldavia are named *Moldavi*; when referring to the period of the formation of the Romanian states, Cantemir uses the variant *Moldovlachi* (*De antiquis et hodierni Moldaviae nominibus*, 92), to distinguish them from *Ungrovlachi* (Wallachians).

Whenever he writes about a Romanian reality, Cantemir also registers the autochthonous variant: *Moldavi seipsos Moldovani, provinciam vero Moldovam vocant* (*Historia Moldo-Vlachica*, 420) – Moldavians call themselves *Moldovani*, and their province *Moldova*.

The Romanian historian must not be accused of using wrong forms of different ethnical names, because he took them *ad litteram* from the sources found while staying in Istanbul.

Writing about Pechenegs, Cantemir registers the forms *Pezenigum* (*Historia Moldo-Vlachica*, 330), *Piczin<i>gos* (*Historia Moldo-Vlachica*, 330), just like the Polish historian Jan Długosz registered *Pyeczenyagos* (ed.1711, Lib. II, 202), *Pyecenyadzis* (ibid., 197), *Pyeczenyedzis* and *Pyeczenyegorum* (ibid., 157).

The inhabitants of Moscow are named *Moscovitae* (*De antiquis et hodiernis Moldaviae nominibus*, 60), *Moscus* (*Historia Moldo-Vlachica*, 132), *Mosqui* (*Historia Moldo-Vlachica*, 324).

Cantemir uses in the same manner the variants *Tatari* (*Historia Moldo-Vlachica*, 194) and *Tartari* (*Historia Moldo-Vlachica*, 240), *Servi* (*Historia Moldo-Vlachica, Praef.*, 130) and *Serbi* (*De antiquis et hodiernis Moldaviae nominibus*, 60), *Ungari* (*Historia Moldo-Vlachica*, 196) and *Hungari* (*De antiquis et hodiernis Moldaviae nominibus*, 110), *Unni* (*Historia Moldo-Vlachica*, 326) and *Hunni* (*Historia Moldo-Vlachica*, 206) and even *Chunni*, but only when quoting and paraphrasing from Bonfinius (*Historia Moldo-Vlachica*, 340).

For Szeklers and Sicilians, there is the same ethnical name, *Siculi*: *teste superius citato Marino, rerum Siculorum scriptore* (*Historia Moldo-Vlachica*, 400, *Siculi* = Sicilians) – according to Marinus, quoted above, a writer of Sicilians' actions; *Siculos, Valachis finitimos* (*Historia Moldo-Vlachica*, 408, *Siculi* = Szeklers) – Szeklers, neighbours of Wallachians. This ambiguity followed from the diplomatic Latin used in the Moldavian chancellery. The ethnical name *Siculus* is, in fact, “the Latinized form of the Hungarian *Szekely*”<sup>4</sup>. Cantemir also uses the graphic variant *Seculi: a Saxonibus, Seculis, Ungarisque prorsus contempti* (*De antiquis et hodiernis Moldaviae nominibus*, 110) – totally despised by Saxons, Szeklers and Hungarians.

It was very difficult for Cantemir to adapt morphologically some ethnical names, especially those referring to Asian populations: *Turci* (*De antiquis et hodiernis Moldaviae nominibus*, 114) and also *Turcae* (*Historia Moldo-Vlachica, Praef.*, 132). The use of the morphological doublet *Turcus/Turca* is an influence of the chancellery Latin used in Moldavia. In the documents written before the 16<sup>th</sup> century the form *Turcus* was dominant,

<sup>4</sup> Mihaela Paraschiv, *Documentele diplomatice latine din Moldova (secolele XIV-XVIII). Studiu lingvistic și stilistic*, Iași : Junimea, 2004, 122.

but from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century the variant *Turca* was preferred both in Romanian and foreign documents. There also existed the graphic variant *Thurcus*<sup>5</sup>, which was not used by Cantemir in his texts.

Other Asian ethnical names: *Pazinacas* and *Pazinaces*, on the same page (*Historia Moldo-Vlachica*, 336) and also there, *sub hoc Principe primae Pazinacum in Romanum Imperium e[r]ruptionis* – “under this Prince there was the first attack of the Pazinacs against the Roman Empire”, in comparison with *principe Pazinacorum* – “from the Prince of the Pazinacs”; *Pazincacorum Princeps* (*Historia Moldo-Vlachica*, 338) – “the Prince of the Pazinacas” and, according to Leunclavius, *Bozinachi* (*Historia Moldo-Vlachica*, 330).

The fact that the author uses several phonetic or morphological variants for an ethnical name reveals his objective perspective with regard to the bibliographical sources. Cantemir intended to present in an exhaustive manner the variants offered by the Byzantine and Latin sources, in order to be consistent with his scientific approach to history.

Ovidius University, Constanța

## References

- Benner, Margareta /Tengström, Emin (1977): *On the Interpretation of Learned Neo-Latin. An explorative study based on some texts from Sweden (1611 - 1716)*, Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis
- Bonfinius, Antonius (1606): *Rerum Ungaricarum decades quatuor cum dimidia*, Hanoviae
- Cantemir, Dimitrie (1983): *Opere complete*, Vol.IX, Partea I: *De antiquis et hodiernis Moldaviae nominibus și Historia Moldo-Vlachica*, Prefață de Virgil Câdea. Ediție critică, traducere, introducere, note și indici de Dan Slușanschi, București: Editura Academiei
- Cluverius, Philippus (1697): *Introductio in universam Geographiam*, Amstelaedanii
- Cremschi, Giovanni (1959): *Guida allo studio del latino medievale*, Padova: Liviana Editrice
- Ijsewijn, Jozef (1977): *Companion to Neo-Latin Studies*, North Holland Publishing Co. Amsterdam, New York: Oxford
- Leunclavius, Ioannes (1596): *Annales Sultanorum Othmanidarum, a Turcis sua lingua scripti*, Francofurti Norberg, Dag (1968): *Manuel pratique de latin médiéval*, Editions A. & J. Picard, Paris
- Paraschiv, Mihaela (2005): *Documentele diplomatice latine din Moldova (secolele XIV-XVIII)*. *Studiu lingvistic și stilistic*, Iași: Junimea
- Strecker, Karl (1933): *Introduction à l'étude du latin médiéval*, Société de publications romanes et françaises XXVI, Gand

---

<sup>5</sup>*Ibidem*.